

MALICIOUS DESTRUCTION

980 in 2001 · 1016 in 2002

Malicious Destruction includes tire-slashing, window-smashing, spray-painting, and a myriad of other crimes in which someone's property is willfully and maliciously damaged or destroyed. It is the most commonly reported crime in Cambridge, accounting for just over 10 percent of the total crime.

Generally speaking, vandalism most often falls into one of the following categories:

1. Juveniles looking for a thrill, including 'taggers' or graffiti artists, sometimes with the intention of "marking their territories" with commonly known symbols
2. Revenge-motivated incidents could include neighbor and/or landlord/tenant disputes, traffic and parking disputes, as well as unsettled domestic situations
3. Botched attempts to break into a car (i.e. the window is smashed or the door lock is broken, but nothing is taken)

Forty to fifty percent of all malicious destruction incidents involve destruction to automobiles; most of these occur overnight to cars parked on the street. Groups of juveniles are often responsible for a score of such crimes on a single evening. Often, malicious destruction is simply an auto theft or larceny from a motor vehicle that was never carried to its conclusion, leaving a window smashed or a door lock popped. Other common malicious destruction crimes involve graffiti, bricks thrown through windows, and damage to household items during domestic disputes. Likely, a large percentage of all malicious destruction incidents are never reported to the police.

Geographically, malicious destruction reaches its greatest totals in neighborhoods with large numbers of residents and, consequently, cars and houses such as the following areas: Mid-Cambridge, East Cambridge, Peabody, and Cambridgeport.

VANDALSIM BY NEIGHBORHOOD		
Area	2001	2002
East Cambridge	96	141
MIT	11	10
Inman/Harrington	74	58
Area 4	122	98
Cambridgeport	113	141
Mid-Cambridge	98	119
Riverside	85	86
Agassiz	27	27
Peabody	96	107
West Cambridge	89	60
North Cambridge	89	60

VANDALISM BY CATEGORY		
Category	2001	2002
Car window smashed	199	209
Dents/other damage to car	221	276
Tires slashed or punctured	111	120
Scratches, "pinstripes"	82	76
Total Damage to Autos	613	681
Misc. damage at residences	58	73
Window of residence smashed	43	30
Total Damage to Residences	101	103
Window of business smashed	53	53
Misc. damage to businesses	46	46
Total Damage to Businesses	99	99
Graffiti	167	126

One of the patterns of malicious destruction during the summer months of 2002 shadowed one that the city was already experiencing - larceny from motor vehicles. These larcenies hit the hardest in July and August, and malicious destruction to cars followed in its' footsteps, accounting for nearly half of the reports of vandalism during these two months. It is safe to say that of these 78 incidents, a considerable amount can be classified as failed attempts of either stealing from a car, or stealing the car itself. The areas that were hit hardest with this destruction were also hit hard with the larcenies during these summer months, which were **Cambridgeport** (16), **East Cambridge** (12), and **North Cambridge** (11).

GRAFFITI

Graffiti is a citywide issue that affects public, private, and institutional property owners. Both graffiti prevention and removal are time consuming, expensive, and require continuous intervention. Perpetrators of graffiti include gang members, bored juveniles, and self-styled “artists” who regard other people’s property as their canvas.

Incidents of graffiti accounted for twelve percent of the malicious destruction total in 2002. It is important to note, however, that a high percentage of these defacings of property are not typically reported to the police. Area 4, North Cambridge and Cambridgeport are the sections of the City with long histories of this type of incident.

The City of Cambridge plays a central role in the eradication of graffiti by coordinating prevention and enforcement efforts, acting as a clearinghouse for graffiti identification and removal, and setting an example by providing good maintenance of its own property. Citizens, community groups, businesses, residential property owners, and other public agencies and institutions are strongly encouraged to work together with the City to effectively combat graffiti.

You Can Help!

- Use the Graffiti Hotline (349-INFO) to report addresses of vandalized sites.
- Organize community clean-up days.
- Remove graffiti promptly from your property.
- Educate your children about the costs and impact of graffiti.

(617)349-INFO · How the Graffiti Hotline Works

Call the Graffiti Hotline

- To report locations where graffiti exists. The information will be forwarded to the appropriate agency or property owner for removal and to the Police Department for investigation.
- To provide information to help apprehend “taggers.” Your information will be kept confidential.
- For information on removal supplies and techniques if you have graffiti on your property.
- For resources to help organize community clean-up days.

Other Graffiti Removal Telephone Numbers

If you witness someone “tagging” property	Call 9-1-1
Cambridge Housing Authority property	864-3020
ComElectric (<i>Electric Poles, Transformers</i>)	1-800-642-7070
Water Department (<i>Fire Hydrants, Fresh Pond Area</i>)	349-4781
Harvard Real Estate Office (<i>Harvard Property</i>)	495-2234
Postal Service (<i>Mail Boxes</i>)	876-0620
MBTA Complaint Line	222-5215
MDC Bridges, Pools, Facilities	727-5114 Ext. 530
MIT Real Estate Office (<i>MIT Property</i>)	253-1483
Middlesex County Courthouse, Registry, Other Facilities	494-4100
Electrical Department (<i>Pay Phones, Fire Boxes</i>)	349-4925
School Department Property	349-6854

